

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office action dated October 6, 2010 has been received and carefully considered. By this amendment, the specification and claims 1, 4, and 11 are amended. No new claims were added. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-20 will be pending. In view of the amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration.

Specification Objection

The office objected to the title as being not descriptive. The applicant amended the title according to the examiner's suggestions.

Claim Objection

The office objected to claim 4 as lacking dependence information. Applicant amended claim 4 to refer back to claim 1 according to the examiner's suggestions.

General Remarks

The office used Wilkinson as a primary reference to reject the claims. In the examiner's analysis, it appears as though the office identified the vaporized LNG stream 43b of Figure 10 in Wilkinson as the liquefied natural gas vapor of the claims (which is stream 2 in Figures 2-4 of the present application). In contrast, and as even more clearly pointed out in the amended claims, the liquefied natural gas vapor in the present matter is withdrawn from the LNG storage tank. Such difference is far from being trivial. First, the vaporizer in Wilkinson is upstream of the fractionator, whereas the vaporizer in the instant matter is downstream of the fractionator. Second, and as a consequence of the above, Wilkinson's fractionator receives the vaporized LNG whereas the fractionator of the claims is configured to allow receiving of the storage tank vapors in combination with the C₃ and heavier components of the fractionator. Such feed is entirely inconsistent with the plant and methods claimed herein.

35 USC §102

The Office rejected claims 1, 3-5, 8-9, 11-13, and 18-19 under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Wilkinson et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 7,155,931). The applicant respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As amended claim 1 and claim 11 expressly require that the liquefied natural gas storage vessel is configured to allow withdrawal a liquefied natural gas liquid and a liquefied natural gas vapor. Thus, and viewed from a different perspective, the vapor and the liquid are both directly obtained from the liquefied natural gas storage vessel. Moreover, amended claims 1 and 11 also require that the fractionator feed is a combination of the C₃ and heavier and the liquefied natural gas vapor. Such elements are neither taught nor suggested in Wilkinson et al. Consequently, and in view of the amendments and arguments provided above, the rejection of claims 1, 3-5, 8-9, 11-13, and 18-19 as being anticipated by Wilkinson et al. should be withdrawn.

35 USC §103

The Office rejected claims 2, and 14-15 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of applicant's admitted prior art. The applicant respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As already noted above and amended herein, it should be appreciated that the liquefied natural gas vapor in the claims is not the vaporized LNG of Wilkinson as pointed out. Indeed, it is noted that Figure 10 teaches LNG processing in which a portion of the LNG is vaporized in a conventional sea water exchanger as then fed into the stripping section of the column. Such vapor is entirely inconsistent with the vapor and vapor handling as presently claimed. Therefore, as claims 2 and 14-15 are dependent on amended claims 1 and 11, respectively, the rejection of claims 2, and 14-15 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of applicant's admitted prior art is improper and should be withdrawn.

The Office rejected claims 6-7, and 16-17 under 35 USC §103 as being obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik (U.S. Pat. No. 6,089,022). The applicant again respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

Similar to the defects noted for Wilkinson above, the rejection of claims 6-7, and 16-17 is also not sustainable in light of the amendments and arguments above. Combination with Zednik fails to remedy these defects. Therefore, claims 6-7, and 16-17 should not be deemed obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik and the rejection should be withdrawn.

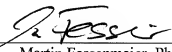
The Office also rejected claims 10 and 20 under 35 USC §103 as being obvious over Wilkinson. The applicant again respectfully disagrees. As before with respect to the defects noted for Wilkinson, the rejection of claims 10 and 20 is not sustainable in light of the amendments and arguments above. Therefore, claims 10 and 20 should not be deemed obvious over Wilkinson in view of Zednik and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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